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				Nov 20, 2000 *	Jun 03, 2001 *	Nov 21, 2002 *	Jun 24, 2003 *	
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Phillips Pronto

written by Mike Shea on 21 November 1999

With all the fancy equipment we buy and all the movies we watch, there is usually only one communications method between you and your equipment. The remote control. Unless you hike your ass off of the couch every time you want to switch an aspect ratio, you use one or (many) more remote controls to tell your system what to do. Now I have a very different point of view about my home theater equipment than my computer. First off, I don't buy to upgrade. I buy the best product I can afford and expect to have it for a long time (like three years). I also want the interface to be as transparent as the equipment. If I could sit down and my system automatically knew to start up and play a DVD, that would be great. I don't want to hunt for the right remote and I don't want to have to figure out system configurations. So I hunted for a remote that matched this style.

What I really want in a remote control is transparency. I don't want it to become anything more than a device to get me doing what I want to do. As far as control goes, I wanted a blank slate. I wanted a remote that controlled everything I want and need and I want a simple interface, preferably custom. Two remotes fit into this mold. One is the Harmon/Kardon Take Control. The other is the Philips Pronto. The Take Control got it's software from Microsoft which was my first strike (Mike's Rule #82, don't let your home theater to turn into a computer). I also found out that it's online support wasn't up yet and that the software it came with was pretty out of date. The Phillips Pronto on the other hand got bad reviews initially but this was without the computer software and internet support. At current time, there are tons of web sites with software for the Pronto and an excellent computer interface including the Pronto programming software. After reading all the positive user reviews, I decided to go ahead and get the Pronto.

I had played with the Pronto software about a week before I decided to buy it. You can download the Marantz RC2000 software (5 MB) which is exactly the same as the Pronto software except for the required registration. I wanted to check it for it's freedom and ease of use. I was very impressed. The software lets you import and export configurations from any internet downloaded pronto file. You can cut and paste buttons, set the screen any way you want, and set up any number of screens. I came up with a rudimentary set of controls for my system and ordered the unit.

Once the remote arrived, I hooked it up and downloaded the configuration I had built. I then began learning codes from my older remotes to the new configuration. At one point I had a scare when it didn't want to learn from my projector. Moving the projector remote about two feet away instead of six inches solved the problem. It learned every command I could send it without a stitch.
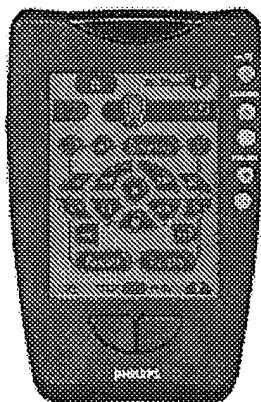
NEW! The layout of the remote itself is very well done. It's bottom concaves to fit your leg or arm rest. The rounded corners give it a friendly feel. It has seven buttons outside the screen that operate very much like a standard remote. These include Volume up and down, Channel up and down, mute, left and right. Each button can be programmed just like a simulated button. In other words, while you are on the DVD screen, the channel up and down skip tracks, while the left and right scan forward or back. Volume can be set to always activate your receiver volume no matter what screen you are on. Generally it is a good idea to put functions you would be using frequently during a movie on these buttons so you don't have to look at the screen.

On to the tweaking. I try to maintain the philosophy that I don't spend more time messing with something than using it for what it is built to do. But like many other things, I spent a lot of time moving buttons, rebuilding screens and setting up more commands. The nice thing about this was that I really felt like I had true freedom. Very rarely did I run into walls in the interface that wouldn't let me do something I wanted to do. The only one I have found so far was that I can't switch the look of a button once I have already set it up. I can rename it and reprogram it, but I can't put a new button image over it. This can be a pain if you have a 12 step macro that you programmed in to a boring grey button only to find a cool looking 3D button you wish you had used.

Speaking of macros, I never really used them before because I never could figure out the bizarre interface to set them up. With this remote you can either have it learn from you while you use the remote or you can set them up in the software which was alot easier for me to do. You can also do this outside of the macro section of the remote which makes it very nice (there is a separate macro menu that you use with the remote by itself). I set up one macro just to start up the system for playing a DVD, another for listening to a CD and a third to shut everything down.

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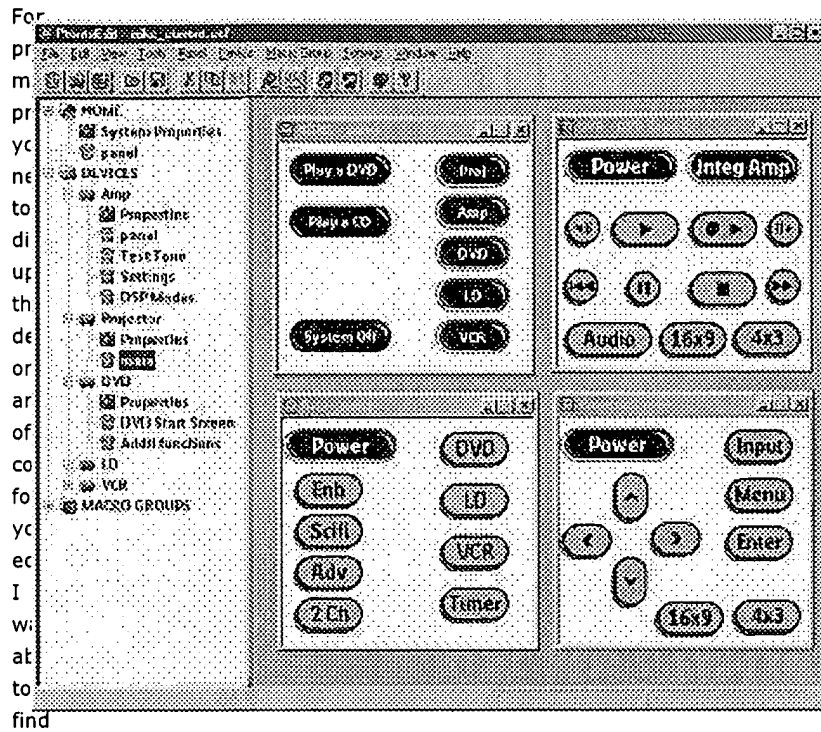
most of the commands at Remote Central. Otherwise your system could get messed up when one component is on and another is off.

After setup, I found that most of everything I wanted to do could be done with very few button presses. Just hitting one button let me sit and watch a DVD. I didn't have to worry that my DSP-A1 had the right settings or that my projector was in the right aspect ratio, all I had to do was relax and watch the film.

This is truly the remote of the Gods. When you factor in the excellent ergonomics, limitless programming, ease of use, ease of programming, ability to customize, macro programming and user support, there simply isn't any other remote that compares. The only disadvantage is the price which set me back more than the cost of my whole first home theater (about $350 to $375). If you can get by that, this is truly the best remote I could ever see wanting.

NEW! **Pronto Easter Egg!** Just got this information off of Remote Central. There is a very interesting hidden surprise for those of you with this wonderful remote. Here are the instructions for accessing this...feature.

- Press and hold: Backlight + Left + Right
- Press in sequence: Mute, Channel up, Mute, Channel Up, Vol down.
- press Mute to exit!

NEW! **Related Information**:

- Remote Central: Best resource for Pronto users.
- Philips Pronto official site More than just a product brochure.
- Marantz RC5000 remote software (5 MB): Exactly like the Pronto software without the registration.

User Comments

Add a comment

From: JoshK (jknechtel@rcn.com) on 26 June 2001

Subject: Got mine on Ebay for $208

I recently used the buy now option to purchase a Pronto (TSU2000 silver) on Ebay for $208 + shipping. It was a retailer and they shipped to

me in two days ($12s/h).

From: Ralph (ralph_stankowski@millipore.com) on 3 October 1999

Thanks Mike, great page! Does anyone know the least expensive place to buy a pronto?? I'm sure others who are interested in this remote will want to know.

From: Wayne Keller (knkenterprises@msn.com) on 26 September 1999

Great site! In your review you stated that you were having difficulty getting new button icons onto your already programmed buttons. All you have to do is double click on the button you want a new icon for to open up the properties window, select the active and inactive icon tabs, hit the load button and browse your way to the file for the graphic you want. The only thing I can think of that might be getting you in trouble is that you might be trying to use JPG's or GIFs. If that's the case then you'll have to convert them to BMP's with another graphics program (like Paint or Photoshop). Pronto will only accept bitmaps (of the proper size) and no other format.wrk

From: Wayne Keller (knkenterprises@msn.com) on 26 September 1999

I'll try this again. If you're having trouble getting new icons onto your buttons try this: Double click on the button you want a new icon for, this will open button properties window, select the Active Icons tab, hit the load button for the Unselected icon and browse your way to the graphic you want. The graphic must be a BMP. No JPGs or GIFs. It must not be too large to fit on the screen, and it must be 4 bit or 2 bit color density. If the graphic you want to use is a JPG or GIF, you can convert it to the proper format and density with Paint, Photoshop, or other application. Hope this helps. Wrk

From: Mike (mshea@liquidtheater.com) on 22 September 1999

If the cost isn't a factor, I wouldn't worry at all about getting a Pronto. On the web site Remote Central you can find the thousands of preprogrammed codes, but it really doesn't take long to set up your own interface which I highly recommend you do. As your system changes, you add a feature or two. It is simple to program and very simple to operate. Almost everyone I have talked to picked the Pronto over the Take Control.

From: MikeN (mikenme99@aol.com) on 13 September 1999

I have put together what I feel to be a pretty elaborate home audio system throughout my parents dream home. I have looked for a remote that would ease their technology worries by putting everything together. I think that I have found it in the pronto. I was reading in home theater about the take control, and one plust that they gave over the pronto was that it came preprogramed with over 1000 codes. Do you feel that is enough to sway my decision and return the pronto or should I forget my worries and stick with what I have. We are not in the house yet, so I have not begun to embark on my programming quest yet. A response or an online chat would be greatly appreciated about this matter. I think that I have covered all other audio aspects pretty good. It's the remote that I'm worried about.!

ser Submitted Links

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1 Papers: infrastructure for ubicomp: Generating remote control interfaces for complex appliances   ▩
Jeffrey Nichols, Brad A. Myers, Michael Higgins, Joseph Hughes, Thomas K. Harris, Roni Rosenfeld, Mathilde Pignol
October 2002 **Proceedings of the 15th annual ACM symposium on User interface software and technology**

Full text available: 📄 pdf(4.58 MB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, citings, index terms

The *personal universal controller* (PUC) is an approach for improving the interfaces to complex appliances by introducing an intermediary graphical or speech interface. A PUC engages in two-way communication with everyday appliances, first downloading a specification of the appliance's functions, and then automatically creating an interface for controlling that appliance. The specification of each appliance includes a high-level description of every function, a hierarchical grouping of tho ...

Keywords: appliances, handheld computers, pebbles, personal digital assistants (PDAs), personal universal controller (PUC), remote control, universal speech interface (USI)

2 The BTRC Bluetooth remote control system   ▩
Fridtjof Feldbusch, Alexander Paar, Manuel Odendahl, Ivan Ivanov
July 2003 **Personal and Ubiquitous Computing**, Volume 7 Issue 2

Full text available: 📄 pdf(847.16 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, index terms

AbstractEmerging radio technologies like WLAN and Bluetooth enable electronic devices of any kind to communicate with one another. A simple and easy to implement application layer protocol called BTRC protocol was developed allowing devices to exchange data of any kind and format over different protocols like TCP/IP or Bluetooth. Based upon this protocol a universal remote control system was implemented. Software applications simulating cellular phones and personal digital assistants (PDA) were ...

Keywords: Bluetooth, Protocol, Remote control

3 Special interest groups: Universal remote console standard: toward natural user interaction in ambient intelligence   ▩
Gottfried Zimmermann, Gregg Vanderheiden, Matthew Ma, Maribeth Gandy, Shari Trewin, Sharon Laskowski, Mark Walker
April 2004 **Extended abstracts of the 2004 conference on Human factors and computing systems**

Full text available: pdf(63.64 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, index terms

The draft standard on a Universal Remote Console (URC) framework is on its way to be reviewed and released by ANSI in 2004. This standard will contribute to the goal of Ambient Intelligence by allowing users to interact with networked devices and services in their environments in universal and natural ways, utilizing technologies such as natural language interaction and wearable computing. This SIG will follow up on last year's successful SIG, whose contributions helped to shape the URC draft st ...

Keywords: abstract user interface, ambient intelligence, intelligent user agent, natural language interaction, standards, universal remote console, universal remote control

4 Demonstrations: Prototype implementations for a universal remote console specification
Gottfried Zimmermann, Gregg Vanderheiden, Al Gilman
April 2002 **CHI '02 extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems**

Full text available: pdf(179.32 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, citings

A 'Universal Remote Console' (URC) is a personal device that can be used to control any electronic and information technology device (target device/service), such as thermostats, TVs, or copy machines. The URC renders the user interface (UI) of the target device in a way that accommodates the user's preferences and abilities. This paper introduces the efforts of user groups, industry, government and academia to develop a standard for 'Alternate Interface Access' within the V2 technical committee ...

Keywords: assistive technology, device independence, disability access, mobile devices, modality-independent user interface, remote control, standards development, universal usability, wireless computing

5 Special interest group: Toward a unified universal remote console standard
Gottfried Zimmermann, Toby Nixon, Marney Beard, Eran Sitnik, Bill LaPlant, Shari Trewin, Sharon Laskowski, Gregg Vanderheiden
April 2003 **CHI '03 extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems**

Full text available: pdf(108.46 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, citings, index terms

Wireless communication technologies make it feasible to remotely control devices and services from virtually any mobile and stationary device. However, there is no stan-dard available today which would allow manufacturers to define an abstracted user interface for their product whose functionality can be instantiated and presented in different ways and modalities on a wide variety of controller tech-nologies, such as, phones, PDAs, and computers. Such a standard could also facilitate usability, ...

Keywords: abstract user interface, accessibility, assistive technology, disability access, mobile devices, remote control, universal usability

6 Student Posters: Informing automatic generation of remote control interfaces with human designs
Jeffrey Nichols
April 2002 **CHI '02 extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems**

Full text available: pdf(710.40 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, citings

Embedded processors are making it possible for common appliances, such as cable boxes, micorwaves, and fax machines, to provide even more fuctionality. Unfortunately, as these appliances become more complex, their interfaces are also becoming harder to use. At the same time, more people are carrying hand-held computerized devices that can communicate. We envision a future in which people will use their handhelds to communicate

with and control common appliances in their environment. This work de ...

Keywords: appliances, handheld computers, pebbles, personal digital assistants (PDAs), remote control

7 The information furnace: consolidated home control
Diomidis D. Spinellis
May 2003 **Personal and Ubiquitous Computing**, Volume 7 Issue 1

Full text available: pdf(488.36 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, index terms

The Information Furnace is a basement-installed PC-type device that integrates existing consumer home-control, infotainment, security and communication technologies to transparently provide accessible and value-added services. A modern home contains a large number of sophisticated devices and technologies. Access to these devices is currently provided through a wide variety of disparate interfaces. As a result, end users face a bewildering array of confusing user-interfaces, access modes a ...

Keywords: Automation, Consumer electronics, Home-control, Multi-modal interfaces

8 Demos: Personal universal controllers: controlling complex appliances with GUIs and speech
Jeffrey Nichols, Brad A. Myers, Michael Higgins, Joseph Hughes, Thomas K. Harris, Roni Rosenfeld, Kevin Litwack
April 2003 **CHI '03 extended abstracts on Human factors in computing systems**

Full text available: pdf(131.14 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, index terms

We envision a future where each person will carry with them a personal universal controller (PUC), a portable computerized device that allows the user to control any ap-pliance within their environment. The PUC has a two-way communication channel with each appliance. It downloads a specification of the appliance's features and then automati-cally generates an interface for controlling that appliance (graphical, speech, or both). In this demonstration we pre-sent a working PUC system that automat ...

9 Composable ad-hoc mobile services for universal interaction
Todd D. Hodes, Randy H. Katz, Edouard Servan-Schreiber, Lawrence Rowe
September 1997 **Proceedings of the 3rd annual ACM/IEEE international conference on Mobile computing and networking**

Full text available: pdf(1.86 MB)   Additional Information: full citation, references, citings, index terms

10 The development of a simple, low cost set of universal access features for electronic devices
Chris Law, Gregg Vanderheiden
November 2000 **Proceedings on the 2000 conference on Universal Usability**

Full text available: pdf(1.33 MB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, citings, index terms

A simple set of universal access features has been developed, which can be applied to almost any public or personal electronic device, providing access for people with a wide variety of sensory and physical disabilities, and a wide variety of functional limitations imposed by circumstance. Implementing the features require adding one to three buttons to the device (or using existing buttons on a device if appropriate), adding speech output and enhancing the programming of the device to utiliz ...

Keywords: EZ access, accessibility, disability, interface design, speech interface

11 Composable ad hoc location-based services for heterogeneous mobile clients
Todd D. Hodes, Randy H. Katz
October 1999 **Wireless Networks**, Volume 5 Issue 5

Full text available: pdf(403.18 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, references, citings, index terms

12 Challenges: Challenge: recombinant computing and the speakeasy approach
W. Keith Edwards, Mark W. Newman, Jana Sedivy, Shahram Izadi
September 2002 **Proceedings of the 8th annual international conference on Mobile computing and networking**

Full text available: pdf(297.46 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, citings, index terms

Interoperability among a group of devices, applications, and services is typically predicated on those entities having some degree of prior knowledge of each another. In general, they must be written to understand the type of thing with which they will interact, including the details of communication as well as semantic knowledge such as when and how to communicate. This paper presents a case for "recombinant computing" -- a set of common interaction patterns that leverage mobile code to allow r ...

Keywords: mobile code, recombinant computing, serendipitous interoperability, speakeasy

13 Abstract user interface representations: how well do they support universal access?
Shari Trewin, Gottfried Zimmermann, Gregg Vanderheiden
June 2002 **ACM SIGCAPH Computers and the Physically Handicapped , Proceedings of the 2003 conference on Universal usability**, Issue 73-74

Full text available: pdf(155.89 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, index terms

This paper examines four XML languages for abstract user interface representation: UIML, XIML, XForms and AIAP. It discusses whether the high level architectures of these languages support the requirements of universal usability by allowing use of personal interfaces. Specific technical requirements include separation of data from presentation, explicit declarative representation of interface elements, their state, dependencies, and semantics, flexibility in inclusion of alternative resources an ...

Keywords: AIAP, UIML, XForms, XIML, abstract user interface, device-independence, modality-independence, universal usability

14 From devices to tasks: automatic task prediction for personalized appliance control
Charles L. Isbell, Olufisayo Omojokun, Jeffrey S. Pierce
July 2004 **Personal and Ubiquitous Computing**, Volume 8 Issue 3-4

Full text available: pdf(489.15 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, index terms

One of the driving applications of ubiquitous computing is *universal appliance interaction*: the ability to use arbitrary mobile devices to interact with arbitrary appliances, such as TVs, printers, and lights. Because of limited screen real estate and the plethora of devices and commands available to the user, a central problem in achieving this vision is predicting which appliances and devices the user wishes to use next in order to make interfaces for those devices available. We believe ...

Keywords: Appliance, Machine learning, Ubiquitous computing, User interaction

15 Conferencing: Ubiquitous computing using SIP
Stefan Berger, Henning Schulzrinne, Stylianos Sidiroglou, Xiaotao Wu
June 2003 **Proceedings of the 13th international workshop on Network and operating systems support for digital audio and video**

Full text available: pdf(96.16 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, index terms

In the past decade, there have been numerous efforts in ubiquitous computing, making computational resources or communication more widely available. We believe that it is time to move to a global-scale ubiquitous computing system that is securable, administered by multiple independent administrators and integrates off-the-shelf hardware and software. We are developing such a system based on the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP), with Bluetooth devices for location sensing and Service Location Pr ...

Keywords: SIP, SLP, bluetooth, location based services, scalability, ubiquitous computing

16 Touchpad-based remote control devices
Neil R. N. Enns, I. Scott MacKenzie
April 1998 **CHI 98 conference summary on Human factors in computing systems**

Full text available: pdf(235.17 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, references, citings, index terms

Keywords: convergent technologies, input devices, remote control devices, television, touchpads, unistroke recognition

17 PACT 2001 workshops: A middleware component supporting flexible user interaction for networked home appliances
Tatsuo Nakajima
December 2001 **ACM SIGARCH Computer Architecture News**, Volume 29 Issue 5

Full text available: pdf(768.83 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, citings, index terms

In this paper, we describe a middleware component supporting flexible user interaction for networked home appliances, which is a simple mechanism to fill the gap between traditional user interface systems and advanced user interaction devices. Our system enables us to control appliances in a uniform way at any places, and the system allows us to select suitable input and output devices according to our preferences and situations. Our system has based on the stateless thin-client system, and tran ...

18 Using handhelds and PCs together
Brad A. Myers
November 2001 **Communications of the ACM**, Volume 44 Issue 11

Full text available: pdf(299.87 KB)
html(37.29 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, references, citings, index terms

19 A Simulation Support System Capable Of Control, Monitoring And Simulation Of Airborne Systems
John C. Ostgaard
December 1978 **Proceedings of the 1978 annual conference**

Full text available: pdf(528.89 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, index terms

With increasing use of simulations as a means of demonstrating and verifying systems, more emphasis has been placed on simulation support systems capable of sustaining these demonstrations. This paper contains a discussion of a current Support System used in conjunction with the Digital Avionics Information System (DAIS) Program being conducted at the Air Force Avionics Laboratory, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Descriptions of Support Hardware Systems and Software Support and ...

20
Infrared communication to control software applications

Walter V. Romero

April 2001 **Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges , Proceedings of the sixth annual CCSC northeastern conference on The journal of computing in small colleges,** Volume 16 Issue 4

Full text available: pdf(41.73 KB)   Additional Information: full citation, abstract, references, index terms

Computers are becoming more and more easy to use. From a sequence of keys pressed to a click of a mouse button users can make choices or events happen. However, people are required to sit at a computer. If they are away from the computer they cannot use the computer. There are, however, many ways to solve this problem. For instance, by voice, people can speak what they want accomplished and the computer can make it happen. Another way is by a remote controller. This research proposes a way to ...

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